



EXECUTIVE COMPUTING

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Subdirectories can save you a lot of time

If you're a busy business person, the one thing you don't want to do is waste a lot of time and energy learning to use a computer. You want programs that are so easy to use that most of your time is spent productively — solving business problems, not computer problems.

A good rule of thumb for executives is that you should not spend more than one hour learning to use the basics of a new program. If you can't use it easily after that, with help from the reference manual, you should delegate the task at hand to someone with a more technical orientation, hire someone to teach you how to use it or find a simpler program.

A good strategy is to be constantly on the lookout for shortcuts. I've come across several through my consulting business, and this week I'll share with you one of them that I use on my IBM PC.

Saving with subdirectories

Subdirectories are pretty basic for any experienced computer user and, in fact, many regular users of the PC-DOS or MS-DOS operating systems take them for granted. (We refer to PC-DOS as the operating system supplied by IBM for the IBM PC family of products. MS-DOS is supplied by Microsoft for PC-compatible computers, and operates very similarly to PC-DOS.)

Let's say, for example, that you use your computer for three types of applications: word processing (for your letters and reports), spreadsheet (for financial planning and budgeting) and data base (for your customer records).

Before hard disks became popular, allowing you to store all your programs and files in one place, people typically used their 'A' floppy disk drive for loading programs, and their 'B' drive to handle the disks that contained the data

needed by the program. You simply loaded the program disk and data disks in their respective drives, and there was little confusion.

With the advent of higher capacity hard disks, however, you now need to store all your programs and all your data on the single "hard" disk, yielding greater speed and ease-of-use. The result, without subdirectories, is a hodgepodge of hundreds of files, all mixed together.

The solution, of course, is to use the new subdirectory commands, so that each application's files appear to be grouped together. (In reality, the files are still mixed up all over the disk, but they now appear to be sorted neatly.)

Simple procedure

Here's how it's done. Assume your "C" drive is the hard disk; you would type in the characters after the following "C >" prompts:

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Because of problems with formats and typesetting, it is impossible to make a "backslash" symbol appear in this column. Where a "/" mark appears in the following examples, please remember that this is backward and that you must reverse the direction of the "slash" when entering the same command on your own computer.)

```
C > md /wp
```

```
C > md /sp
```

```
C > md /db
```

Using the "make directories" command, three subdirectories are set up.

You can name your subdirectories however you please, up to eight characters. In this case, we used "wp" for word processing, "sp" for spreadsheet and "db" for the data base applications.

The way to get into any subdirectory is simple. For example, to access your word processing files, you type: C > cd /wp. This uses the "change directory" command.

From now on, whenever the C > appears on your screen, you will be in the word processing subdirectory. If you type "Dir" to see a listing of your files, only those in this subdirectory will appear.

To get out of the subdirectory, just type:

```
C >cd/db,for your data base subdirectory;
```

```
C >cd/sp,for your spreadsheet subdirectory,  
or
```

```
C >cd/, to go to your "root" directory, which  
contains all files not put in subdirectories.
```

Let's say you have made the subdirectories, but haven't put your programs and data in them yet. Here's how to move your word processing program files from the floppy disk in drive A to the subdirectory /wp in drive C: A > copy a : . . . c:/wp.

There are many variations of the copy command (explained more fully in your DOS manual) that allow you to copy files to and from other locations, but you get the general idea. After you are finished moving all your files to the appropriate subdirectory, you can enter and use each subdirectory almost as if it were a separate disk drive on your machine.

You can even create subdirectories within subdirectories, allowing each user of the computer to have his or her own group of files.

Hillel Segal is an independent Boulder computer consultant and editor of the Executive Computing Newsletter, published by the Association of Computer Users. He can be reached at ACU, P.O. Box 9003, Boulder 80301.